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ABSTRACT

Marked incongruity exists between the present language teaching system in Australia and the nation's social structure. Few of the languages spoken in the community by major ethnic groups are taught in the schools and little effect of the society's pluralism is evident in objectives and methods. Three causes of this situation are examined, and new roles for language teaching that will match social needs are discussed. One major goal emerges as the fostering of favorable cross-cultural attitudes. This leads to community involvement approaches to second language teaching and extends second language learning into the realm of personality development. Erikson's "identity crisis" and "intimacy crisis" and Freire's notion of "conscientization" are used to elucidate student needs and to suggest desirable approaches to methodology. Consideration of insights from modern linguistic and psycholinguistic studies leads to similar implications for teaching practice. In brief, students learn best through using the language in real and purposeful communication and cross-cultural attitudinal development necessitates interaction with native speakers. Such needs seem to be best catered for in community involvement activities as an integral and integrating part of a language course. (Author)

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EDUCATION FOR PLURALISM

THE CHANGING ROLE OF LANGUAGE TEACHING IN AUSTRALIA

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D.E. INGRAM

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I. THE PRESENT SITUATION

I.1 The Social Structure and Languages Offered:

Australian language teaching is a system of incongruities. Australia is a pluralist society in which 21.9% of Australian-born children have at least one parent born in a non-English-speaking country [Working Party on Languages and Linguistics, Australian Universities Commission 1975:46], yet in 1974 only 16.43% of matriculation students studied a language other than English [Ibid:18]. Australia lies in the Asian-Pacific region, its major trade is with Asia, and in 1970, 93.7% of persons surveyed thought Asian languages should be taught [Commonwealth Advisory Committee 1970:18], yet by 1974 only 1.5% of matriculation students were taking an Asian language [Working Party on Languages and Linguistics, Australian Universities Commission 1975:18]. A recent survey by students at the Mt. Gravatt C.A.E. showed that 64.7% of Australians and 63.5% of "migrants" thought migrant languages should be taught [Tataraki and Kantor 1976], yet, in 1974, only 1.3% of matriculation students took a migrant language [Working Party on Languages and Linguistics, Australian Universities Commission 1975]. The 1971 census listed 19 non-English-speaking countries where 11,500 or more Australian people were born yet the language teaching system is dominated by one language, French, taken by 30.74% more matriculation students in 1974 than all the other languages together [Ibid: 18 and 45]. The French community is twentieth in order of size of Australian communities [Ibid:45 but add "Anglo" and Aboriginal communities] yet French was taught in all 15 universities surveyed in 1973 and German in 12 while Italian was found in only 6, Greek in 3, Russian in 5, Portuguese in 3, Spanish 4, Dutch and Swedish 2, and there were no language learning courses for an Aboriginal language, for Polish, Czech, Bulgarian, Serbo-Croat, Latvian, Lithuanian, Estonian, Ukrainian, Hungarian or Turkish [Australian Academy of the Humanities Committee on Foreign Languages 1975:44] Although one would not want size of the ethnic community to be the sole factor determining the languages to be taught, nevertheless, the imbalance implicit

in these figures is striking and clearly suggests that, in selecting the languages to teach, the Australian education system has taken little cognizance of the nature of the society it serves.

I.2 Society, Objectives and Methods

Equally, there is no evidence that the nature of the society has had any significant effect on objectives and methods. An extensive survey of matriculation French by the present writer in 1975 showed that traditional grammar-translation-literature objectives and methods remained dominant and the A.U.C. report shows that, despite an increase in "language related courses", in 1973 traditional courses (at 66.69%) dominated the system [Working Party on Languages and Linguistics, Australian Universities Commission 1975:14 and 16]. Nowhere is there evidence that community resources are being significantly utilized to create more meaningful and practical courses aiming at more socially relevant objectives.

I.3 Success of the System:

Furthermore, there is no evidence that this ignoring of Australia's social and international reality occurs because the existing system is working satisfactorily. Language enrolments at matriculation have declined from 40.3% of total candidates in 1967 to 16.43% in 1974 [Ibid:18]. At lower levels, an even more disturbing acceleration of the decline is appearing with actual language enrolments in Grade 9 in Queensland declining 6.05% from 1973 to 1974, 8.11% 1974 to 1975, and 12.63% 1975 to 1976, until, today, less than one-third of Grade 9 students are taking a language [Figures from Board of Secondary School Studies]. At higher levels, Australian university enrolments, always small, have declined further from 9.5% of total enrolment in 1965 to 7% in 1973 [Australian Academy of the Humanities 1975:48]. These figures give one no option but to conclude that most students seem unable to see sufficient value or relevance in the present language teaching system to warrant their taking languages.

1.4 Three Causes:

Other figures suggest some of the causes of this situation. The A.U.C. report shows that despite the sharp overall decline in matriculation language enrolments from 1967 to 1974, enrolments in major community languages, where offered, actually increased by 85.76% and Asian languages increased four-fold [Working Party on Languages and Linguistics, Australian Universities Commission 1975:18]. It would seem, therefore, that community and Asian Languages may be seen by students as more relevant.

The proficiency levels likely to be attained also seem to significantly affect students' willingness to undertake language study. These remain, in fact, low, the present writer's survey already referred to [Ph.D. thesis, forthcoming] revealing that, after at least 5 years' study, students had reached only about S-1+ R-1+ (sometimes R-2) on the 5-point scale of the Foreign Service Institute School of Language Studies. In fact, the Mt. Gravatt survey referred to earlier found that 33.3% of Australian-born respondents gave the low level of proficiency that students could expect to attain as the major reason for the decline in language study as against 25% who gave vocational reasons [Tataraki and Kantor 1976:5].

Australian society's self-concept is clearly another cause of the present situation. This society was never homogeneous and monolingual but it is certain that that is how it viewed itself and that it exerted considerable social, educational and political pressures to maintain this situation. Successive governments' migration policies aimed traditionally at "total assimilation" [Bostock 1973:42], a goal expressed by one Prime Minister in 1949 as

> "the ideal of one Australian family, devoid of foreign communities, thus preserving our homogeneity and solidarity as a nation". [From a letter to the Premier of Victoria, quoted in Martin 1972:14]

The popular attitude was exemplified in 1956 by Albert Monk, a former A.C.T.U. President:

> "One of the first causes of friction we encounter is the fear that the presence of foreigners will undermine our own way of life. And Australian men and women ... are not reassured by hearing foreign languages spoken in public places." [Quoted in Bostock 1973:41]

I.5 Present Situation in Summary:

In brief, Australian society traditionally but incorrectly has seen itself as homogeneous and monolingual and the language teaching system has ignored the real situation. That the social reality is, in fact, very different is implicit in figures quoted earlier and no longer needs arguing here. The implications for language teaching are far-reaching.

II. THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE TEACHING IN THE PLURALIST SOCIETY:

II.1 Goals:

Three basic roles emerge for the education system as a whole and for language teaching in particular from the pluralist society. First, second language skills to facilitate communication between individuals, groups, and generations, for family, social, business, educational and political purposes become essential. Secondly, the education system's role as the transmitter of a community's culture and life-style becomes more complex, a diversity of cultures and traditions being required to be transmitted. Thirdly, the education system must develop in its students cross-cultural attitudes favourable to an harmonious and rewarding life in the pluralist society and to the enriched evolution of that society. It is the language teaching component of the curriculum that has most to contribute to those goals, in particular, by fostering the development of favourable cross-cultural attitudes and by promoting language proficiency. Acceptance of these goals and the consequent utilization of community resources can do much, it will be seen, to make language teaching more effective as well as more relevant.

II.2 Effecting Attitude Change:

The development of favourable cross-cultural attitudes is likely to come through two processes: first, the learner escapes beyond the boundaries of his own language and culture and experiences at first hand what it is to belong to another culture, to see the world through other eyes, and to be a foreigner in that culture. Secondly, he learns to see the people of the other culture as fellow human beings with the same array of needs and emotions which might, nevertheless, be transformed differently into expression. Wilga Rivers has stressed this role for language teaching:

> "As students act out the role of the foreigner, trying to use his language as he would use it and see things as he would see them, reading what he would read, they are able to identify with him in a way which is not possible in a course in social studies or comparative literature in translation. This experience opens the door to a deeper understanding of another culture and a wider tolerance of different ideas and patterns of behaviour." [Rivers 1968:26]

Lambert and Tucker have concluded from their attitudinal studies that cross-cultural attitudinal development must be related to language learning. They state:

> " ... we are convinced that the goal of biculturalism or other culture sensitivity must be linked to the goal of bilingualism."
> [Lambert and Tucker 1972:177]

Language teachers may wish to claim that they have always envisaged the goal of cross-cultural attitudinal development. However, this cannot be achieved where language courses, as reflected in the dropout rate(1), turn students off, fail to provide a realistic level of proficiency, and make no overt attempt to develop cross-cultural understanding apart from the listing of a few "interesting" and generally a-typical facts about the C_2. If

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(1) 82.23% in foreign languages in Queensland from Grade 9 in 1973 to Grade 12 in 1976 compared with 59.11% for total enrolments [Figures from Board of Secondary School Studies].

genuine attitudinal development is to occur, radical re-structuring of language teaching is required in order to develop useful communication skills, cross-cultural understanding, and appropriate attitudes. In particular, these views lead to a "community involvement" approach to language teaching since the need is for the members of the other culture to be seen as fellow human beings and not just as curious specimens. This can only occur when direct personal interaction takes the other people off their museum shelves as the student, instead of merely learning about a people and their culture, becomes acquainted with individuals and thus, as Saint-Exupéry says in Le Petit Prince, starts to "créer des liens ".

II.2.1 Conscientization:

Furthermore, there is advantage in the attitudinal goal and the reasons for envisaging it being made clear to the students. This has the double effect, first, of permitting relevant issues to be raised for discussion and, second, of encouraging the use of reading and other activities (including, for example, FL versions of the Oxfam games) which directly raise attitudinal issues and provide further vicarious experience of what it is to belong to another culture and to live in different circumstances. This approach uses the conscientization process to make L_2 learning personally relevant to the individual. Only when he is aware of the equality of races, cultures and languages and of the limitations that his own enculturation has imposed upon him will he be able to modify his attitudes and develop a sensitivity that crosses cultural boundaries. The comments by Peck and Whitlow are relevant in the light of what is shortly to be said about L_2 learning and personality:

> "...for effective personality change... the level of 'self-exploration' which requires the client to explore his feelings, values, relationships and fears, may be an important determinant of successful outcome." [Peck and Whitlow 1975:45]

In Paulo Freire's words:

> "Only beings who can reflect upon the fact that they are

> determined are capable of freeing themselves. Their reflectiveness results not just in a vague and uncommitted awareness, but in the exercise of a profoundly transforming action upon the determining reality." [Freire 1972:52]

Thus, the learner must become aware of the socio-cultural reality and of his power as a member of the society to change ethnocentric attitudes and injustices. In addition, this approach provides him with the linguistic tools which, in a pluralistic society, are fundamental to that change. Language learning thus expands far beyond the mere learning of syntax and lexis and becomes a means by which the learner as a knowing subject becomes aware of sociocultural reality, of his power to modify it, of his ability as a member of the society to effect changes that will lead to a better and more just world and a richer and more responsive life for himself and others. Language teaching thus assumes a central role in education for social transformation, in "cultural action for freedom". This essential humanizing process in education which, in the pluralist society, language teaching most effectively carries out is Freire's central thesis:

> "Whereas the being which merely lives is not capable of reflecting upon itself and knowing itself living <u>in</u> the world, the existent subject reflects upon his life within the very domain of existence, and questions his relationship with the world...
>
> "Whereas animals adapt themselves to the world to survive, men modify the world in order <u>to be more</u>...
>
> " ... because they impregnate the world with their reflective presence, only men can humanize or dehumanize. Humanization is their utopia which they announce in denouncing dehumanizing processes."
>
> [Freire 1972:52,55]

II.2.2 <u>L_2 Learning and Personality Development</u>:

Erikson's personality theories seem to me to provide valuable insights into human behaviour which can help to explicate the role of language teaching in developing attitudes appropriate for life in the pluralist society. Acquisition of a new language entails a significant personality crisis since, even apart from the insecurity brought by inadequate language development and the retreat to seemingly childish modes of expression, acquisition of a

new language carries with it the implicit necessity to re-structure one's perception of the world [Ingram and Elias 1975 and Elias and Ingram, forthcoming], to re-express oneself in a different way, and, basically, to modify one's identity. Most of Erikson's phases or "crises" of personality development can be seen being renegotiated during language learning. Here, however, time will restrict the discussion to only those crises particularly relevant to adolescence, the identity and the intimacy crises.

The Identity Crisis

In second language learning, the identity crisis is renegotiated as the learner perceives L_2 speakers (especially of his own age group) as people with whom he can communicate, as people with comparable needs and aspirations to himself, as people with whom he can empathize or at least sympathize as a result of perceiving, as Erikson says, that there is some continuity, sameness, and meaning to life which persists even across languages and cultures. The successful negotiation of this identity crisis is promoted as he finds himself able to use the L_2 to find out what other people think and feel, to establish his own identity and theirs through the L_2; it is promoted as he finds himself able as a co-ordinated and valued individual to move and communicate with confidence in the L_2 community, as he finds that the L_2 people can respond to and accept him and he them. Inevitably, even at advanced levels, he will find his language proficiency and his cultural understanding to be inferior to the native speaker's but the identity crisis entails the individual's mastery, again in Erikson's words, of "an overweening conscience" and his realization that, despite such deficiencies, he can still sympathize, communicate, and be accepted for himself. This realization cannot come from textbook study of lexis and syntax or by trivial conversation in a barren classroom but only in the course of agreeable, stimulating and psychologically rewarding interaction with native speakers in a variety of situations both formal and informal. This realization is fundamental to the development of cross-cultural attitudes favourable to life in the pluralist society and leads logically to

community involvement activities as a part of the language learning programme.

The Intimacy Crisis

The other personality crisis I wish to refer to is the intimacy crisis, a crisis manifested in the adolescent's seeking to establish close personal relations with others, in forming intimate friendships, in Fromm's terms [1957: Chapter 1], in learning how to love, or, as Erikson says, in satisfying his need for a kind of fusion with the essence of other people and for a communion with their inner resources. It is not being suggested here that the language teacher's role includes a romantic match-making task - that would be an absurdly narrow interpretation of the issues - but he should be aware of the powerful motivating potential of this basic personality need, of the part that it plays in attitudinal development, and of its role in language development. As Halliday has made clear, it is in using language in interpersonal interaction and for the achievement of some end that it takes on meaning [Halliday 1975, and 1974: Chapters I, II and IV]. If the L_2 is to become a real language for the student in the same way that his L_1 is with the range of denotative, connotative and functional meanings that the L_1 has, it is desirable that it also should be experienced in use responding to this need, i.e., in social contexts where the opportunity arises for the learner to use the L_2 in response to this need by forming friendships, perhaps establishing close relationships, and, in Fromm's terms, "learning how to love." Language teaching whose central learning activities include opportunities for this to occur with native speakers of the L_2, especially where they are members of another ethnic group in the pluralist society, makes language learning more relevant to the basic needs of the individual and of society, practises the language in activities of intrinsic importance to the learner, and promotes the development of more natural and "essential" understanding of the other cultural group. Thus it promotes the development of both skills and attitudes favourable to life in the pluralist society.

II.2.3 Attitudes and Personality:

The views enunciated in this discussion of personality and L_2 learning recognize, as Halliday has stated, that language is the medium by which a human being becomes a personality by virtue of its mediation between him and society [cf Halliday 1974:11]. The personality crises that Erikson has delineated are worked out through language and, furthermore, if personality is taken to include the individual's hierarchy of values, attitudes, emotions and responses, then L_2 learning necessarily entails personality modification and it is appropriate and, indeed, inevitable that the personality crises should again, at least in part, be worked out through the L_2. It is especially appropriate if one objective is the development of favourable cross-cultural attitudes since attitude modification itself entails modification of the individual's value or reference system and hence personality change. In providing the opportunity for the L_2 to be exercised in the personality crises which the adolescent's growth and which L_2 acquisition and the associated attitudinal changes entail, the teacher is providing relevant, motivating contexts in which to practise the L_2, the L_2 is being learned through its purposeful use for the achievement of other desired ends, and the teacher is permitting his teaching to be responsive to the felt needs of the learners and of the society.

II.3 Methodology:

The issues so far considered in this paper have profound implications for language teaching methodology. The importance of these implications is reinforced by the fact that they also emerge when one considers what recent developments in the linguistic sciences have to say for the development of language proficiency. These developments include, for example, the notion of language functions and their role in language acquisition [cf Halliday 1975, Nelson 1973, Francis 1975, Davies 1975, Wallace 1975], the need to contextualize language practice [cf Ingram 1976, Halliday 1975], the intrinsic learning schedule which seems largely independent of the teacher's schedule, the role

of creative reconstruction in language acquisition [cf Chomsky 1965, Chomsky and Hampshire 1968, Corder 1967, Dulay and Burt 1975], and the need to cater for individual learning styles [cfNelson 1973, Francis 1975, Burstall 1974, Bayley 1968]. Perhaps of most importance, is the new emphasis on a fact that has long been known though rarely applied and which recently has re-emerged into prominence as a result of studies of both L_1 acquisition [e.g. Halliday 1975, Nelson 1973] and of L_2 learning [e.g. Carroll 1967]. This fact is that language is best learned through use and, as a corollary, that language courses must focus on the purposeful use of the language and encourage the learner's creative reconstruction processes as he manipulates the language to achieve desired erds beyond the language itself. Such views of language learning are fundamental in most modern studies of L_1 acquisition and in transformational generative grammar and do not require discussion here. In L_2 learning, they receive some negative justification in the apparent failure of audio-lingual approaches to develop language proficiency effectively [cf Von Elek 1975, Smith 1970, and Burstall 1975]. Such approaches, like "traditional" methods, necessarily see language learning as a passive, receptive or, in Freire's terms, "digestive" process [cf Freire 1972:26] and, by reducing language learning to the memorization of patterns and vocabulary, make language, contrary to its real nature, an end in itself. Furthermore, there is much positive evidence that "remedial" courses of the "drilling out errors" type have no significant effect on proficiency [cf Carroll 1967:202]. Emmans et al in their survey of the use of FL's in British industry and commerce found that the "new" graduates who had experienced skill- and function-based courses gravitated to jobs that required higher proficiency levels. At the B.A.A.L. - S.E.L.M.O.U.S. Conference in Birmingham in 1975, the futility of traditional or drill-based "remedial" courses in preparing students to participate successfully in British universities was continually shown [e.g. Davies 1975, Wallace 1975, Close 1975]. It would seem, then, that languages are best learned in courses that encourage their purposeful use for the achievement of some extrinsic end. Such courses, it should be

observed, result also if one draws methodological implications from the social and attitudinal issues considered in the first part of this paper.

Time will not allow the full methodological implications to be considered here but the present writer has discussed them in some detail elsewhere [e.g. Ingram 1976, 1976a and 1976b] and they will be exemplified in two innovative French courses at the Mt. Gravatt C.A.E. in Semester Two, 1976 and Semester One, 1977. In particular, such courses lead to community involvement activities as a central part of the language learning programme but supported by individualized grammar programmes, the teaching of relevant functions, and specific attention to culture in the broadest sense.

III. CONCLUSION:

In Pilote de Guerre, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry says:

> "Connaître, ce n'est point démontrer, ni expliquer. C'est accéder à la vision. Mais, pour voir, il convient d'abord de participer. Cela est dur apprentissage ... "

Like language learning, it is a difficult experience for the learner but it is also a difficult lesson for teachers. It is a lesson that reaches to the heart of the problems involved in the development both of language proficiency and of cross-cultural attitudes. It is a lesson that our education system has yet to learn. It is a lesson which, when learned, will greatly increase the effectiveness of language teaching and will provide for it a new and vital role in Australian and world society. It is a lesson which will raise language teaching to its just place as that element of the curriculum which is most propitious for the development of an harmonious, sensitive and rewarding life in the pluralist society, a life which acknowledges and capitalizes upon the cultural and linguistic resources that have been brought to and developed in this country since its pre-history.

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